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## **MOLINA EXPANDS GRAFFITI ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM**

Significant and Visible Crime Reduction Attributed to Graffiti Pilot - 350 Plus Arrests  
in 2008, Weapons and Drugs Seized, Prolific Taggers Prosecuted

Parents Held Accountable

LOS ANGELES COUNTY (April 28, 2009) – At the Board of Supervisors meeting today, Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina requested expansion of her existing graffiti abatement program – the Graffiti / Vandalism Enforcement Team (VET) by amending County contracts to expand in other parts of her district with the goal of eventually expanding countywide.

“The VET has been a significant contributor to reducing crime and today we are expanding the program beginning with East Los Angeles and Florence-Firestone,” said Molina. “Our intent has been to expand this successful graffiti abatement program in other unincorporated areas and in partnership with local cities -- the CEO and Sheriff have been evaluating the program to see how we can it regional,” said Molina.

### Graffiti VET and Graffiti Tracker

The standard Graffiti Tracking system, currently utilized by numerous municipalities including the county, allows for unified tracking and cross-sharing of information among law enforcement and related agencies. It is utilized by the Graffiti/VET to more effectively investigate acts of vandalism and obtain successful prosecutions.

The Graffiti/VET team includes the Sheriff, Probation, Public Works, the District Attorney's office and county counsel. In addition, the team partners with Spiritt Family Services to connect first-time offenders with youth services and parents to the Parent Project.

In 2008, Molina's Graffiti Pilot resulted in more than 350 arrests in Pico Rivera and West and South Whittier (county); and parents and youth offenders voluntarily attending counseling programs. Molina also introduced a new county Ordinance establishing a civil procedure for the County to recover graffiti civilly.

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## MOLINA/GRAFFITI PROGRAM EXPANSION, 2-2-2-2

“Graffiti is an epidemic – and through our Graffiti / VET Pilot and prevention efforts, we are telling the graffiti vandals we mean business,” said Molina. “This is about preventive services for families, intervention programming for first time offenders, and aggressive suppression and enforcement for the most egregious taggers. We are making progress in our fight against graffiti and crime and I am glad we can expand this program to prosecute the graffiti vandals and hold parents accountable in more parts of the county.”

After learning about Pico Rivera’s successful graffiti enforcement model, Molina launched the successful six-month Graffiti/Vandalism Enforcement Team (VET) in 2008 and later made it permanent. The pilot was in response to the violent deaths of Pico Rivera resident Maria Hicks and Valinda resident Robert Whitehead, who tried to stop graffiti vandals, Molina wanted an aggressive graffiti enforcement effort which also held parents accountable and required restitution for damages and enforcement costs. East L.A. resident Luis Gonzalez became another “graffiti” murder victim in 2008.

### **VET Pilot – 2008 Notable Results**

- The most prolific tagger responsible for more than 57 tags and \$60,000 in damage in the West Whittier area (county) was arrested July 28, 2008. Minor, 17 known as “RAGE,” is pending court Hearing.
- Tagger responsible for more than 100 locations and more than \$40,000 in damages in Pico Rivera was arrested at his residence March 19 in addition to three others charged with possession of an unregistered handgun, loaded firearm, methamphetamine, narcotic paraphernalia and receiving stolen property. Adult, 21 known as KAOS recently received a six month sentence and orders for restitution to the city. The three other individuals were sentenced to County Jail.
- Total of 41 percent of the families with minors voluntarily submitted to conditions of probation prior to their case being adjudicated and voluntarily attend a parenting or youth intervention program. Out of those families, none of the minors have been re-arrested or appear to have committed additional acts of vandalism.
- Nine parents voluntarily participated, and completed the Parent Project by Spirit Family Services July 10. An additional 13 parents have voluntarily enrolled for the next 10-week course.
- A total of 23 minors are currently enrolled on a voluntarily basis in Spiritt Family Services’ youth intervention program which focuses on group counseling, decision-making, goal setting, anger management. In addition, the agency incorporates case management to help address family issues and communication problems in the home.

Residents should NEVER CONFRONT graffiti vandals/taggers. Instead, call the County's Zero Tolerance Graffiti Hotline at (800) 675-4375, and report suspicious criminal activity to local Sheriff Station or police agency. Parents and youths seeking assistance within or near their community, can contact 2-1-1.

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